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ASSET

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A Tribute

P.K. Srinivasan (November 4, 1924 - June 20, 2005) served as the Curator-Director of Ramanujan Museum & Math Education Centre which he helped establish in 1993. Srinivasan founded the Association of Mathematics Teachers of India in 1956 and he was awarded the National Science Award by Government of India in 1991 for promoting mathematics among children.

Mr. S. Sundaram, Principal of Atul Vidyalaya, Valsad remembers him with affection and respect.



My Friend PKS

My friend P K Srinivasan (PKS) passed away at the age of 80. Men like him are born once in a thousand years.

I met PKS when he was visiting Rishi Valley School, traditionally dressed, with a sheet of paper in hand wanting to share an interesting article on mathematics with anyone who was interested. He was an evangelist for Mathematics. I have seen in PKS a single-minded passion for mathematics and that it must reach children.

Our friendship grew fast as both were interested in a multitude of subjects. I was always good in mathematics. But spending time with him revealed my ignorance about the subtle and beautiful aspects of mathematics.

As my interest in mathematics grew, I found that he would share his knowledge without any reservations. I know many instances when he ungrudgingly gave ideas for a Math Exhibition or Contest and the receiver did not even acknowledge his contribution.

During my 5 years in Chennai, I got an opportunity to learn under him and also apply this understanding in SRF Vidyalaya. If today, I am considered some sort of an 'expert' in teaching/ learning primary mathematics, it is wholly due to PKS.

PKS had a fantastic collection of books and maintained several volumes of scrap books of paper cuttings on a variety of subjects.

He really felt that teachers were like the Pujaris who stand between God (Good Mathematics) and the Bhaktas (Students). Mathematics was a very easy subject made complicated by teachers who never understood its simplicity.

He felt that the Math genius Srinivasa Ramanujan was not understood in his own country. Single handedly he brought out 2 commemorative volumes on the works and memories of Ramanujan. He established a Ramanujan Museum in Chennai with the collected memorabilia related to Ramanujan, like photographs and letters. His dream was to have a Mathamagic Plaza in the lines of Disneyland where people can experience at first hand, through dynamic models and animation, the beauty of mathematics and their role in every day life.

His passion for Mathematics was visible as one approached his house in Nanganallur, a suburb of Chennai. On the compound, gates and walls were represented equations, identities and proofs-by-sight.

3 favourite quotations of PKS

"Concepts cannot be taught.
They have to be caught"

"If a child is not able to catch a
concept the way you throw it, do not
continue to throw it to him in the
same way. Try another."

"Never say I have taught and he
has not learnt. Always say
that if he has not learnt
then I have not
taught"